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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR  
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STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
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WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
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SUBJECT: MINISTER OF CULTURE SUBMITS RESIGNATION

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 1329

**¶1.** (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

**¶2.** (SBU) Summary: Minister of Culture Daniel Elie submitted his resignation to President Preval on August 9 following a vote of no confidence against the Minister in the Chamber of Deputies on July 31 (reftel). After a two-week standoff with Parliament over the vote, public pressure prompted Elie to submit his resignation. Although Preval still appears unwilling to meet Parliament's demands to reshuffle the Cabinet, acceptance of Elie's resignation signals that he appears to realize that sustained tension with Parliament would weaken the executive and undermine his anti-corruption campaign. Strident threats by the deputies to target other ministers with the same measure may have influenced his decision to concede. End summary.

**¶3.** (SBU) Minister of Culture Daniel Elie submitted his resignation to President Preval on August 9, following a vote of no confidence against the minister in the Chamber of Deputies on July 31 (reftel). Since the vote, public pressure has been mounting for Preval to dismiss Elie. In open letters to President Preval and Prime Minister Alexis on August 4, Elie protested the decision of the Parliament and requested the government investigate the charges against him and publish the results. This touched off a public constitutional debate, with political experts such as Myrlande Manigat publicly stating that Elie was required by the constitution to step down immediately. (Note: Manigat is a constitutional authority and leader of the opposition party Assembly of Progressive National Democrats. End note.) Other legal experts fueled the debate on the radio, proclaiming that Elie's resignation letter was "superfluous and unnecessary" since according the Constitution, it is obligatory to step down the moment after parliament passes a vote of no confidence. In such cases, they underscored, the president has no choice and must comply with the decision.

**¶4.** (U) In a widely published letter of response to Elie written on August 13, Preval accepted his resignation, but requested he remain in office to manage the Ministry's daily operations until a successor is designated. He said furthermore that the investigation Elie demanded is underway, and promised the results would be published soon. Finally,

the President thanked Elie for his contributions to the fight against corruption and vowed to fight corruption of all forms in every area of state activity.

¶15. (SBU) The Chamber of Deputies, meanwhile, has moved on to a new target, threatening to pass a vote of no confidence against Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean Renald Clerisme. The deputies claim Clerisme has done nothing to fight corruption in his ministry.

¶16. (SBU) Comment: Preval's initial refusal to dismiss Elie (reftel), in clear defiance of Parliament's demands, raised the possibility of a long-term standoff between the President and the Parliament. Elie's resignation calms the waters for now, but the deputies continue to demand changes to the Cabinet, a move that is unlikely to warm relations between the executive and the parliament.

TIGHE